
Health Care & Wellness Committee

HB 2755

Brief Description: Concerning transparency regarding the cost of air ambulance services.

Sponsors: Representatives Schmick, Caldier and Cody.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the lead organization for the All-Payer Claims Database to publish data on air ambulance service claims.
- Requires the Department of Health to collect and publish data on air ambulance service rates.

Hearing Date: 1/28/20

Staff: Kim Weidenaar (786-7120).

Background:

All-Payer Claims Database.

The 2014 Legislature directed the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to establish a statewide all-payer health care claims database (APCD). The OFM must use a competitive procurement process to select a lead organization to coordinate and manage the APCD. The goals of the APCD are to improve transparency to:

- assist patients, providers, and hospitals to make informed choices about care;
- enable providers, hospitals, and communities to benchmark their performance;
- enable purchasers to identify value, build expectations into their purchasing strategies, and reward improvements over time; and
- promote competition based on quality and cost.

Data from the APCD is available to consumers and other interested parties through *Washington HealthCareCompare*. The website allows searches to find doctor groups and hospitals, and to compare prices for common medical procedures and treatment at nearby hospitals, ambulatory surgery and other outpatient health centers.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In 2019 the authority and oversight of the APCD was transitioned from the OFM to the Health Care Authority (HCA).

Air Ambulance Regulation.

The Department of Health (DOH) is responsible for licensing emergency medical services agencies and services, including air ambulance services. Currently there are three licensed air ambulance services in Washington. Federal government air ambulance resources are exempt from state licensure. Federal services located in Washington state may provide limited services outside of the provisions of declared emergencies.

Summary of Bill:

The lead organization for the APCD must make information about air ambulance service claims data available on a publicly available website in a searchable format by geographic region, provider, and other relevant information.

The DOH must require that each licensed ambulance service that provides air ambulance transport annually report to the DOH:

- the air ambulance service rates for uninsured patients and the methodology for applying the rate to a transport by air; and
- a list of all the charges made to uninsured patients for air transport within the reporting period including information about the distance and type of transport.

The DOH must post this information on its publicly available website and in a searchable format that does not identify any patient. The DOH must determine the method, format, and timing for the annual reporting and may adopt rules.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.